



Increased tax on cars

Car prices have been increased in this budget as our finance minister had already said it in his pre-budget press conference. Now my question to him is, can he show us one reason why people would not think of owning a car in Dhaka city? So far, have we been able to do anything for our transport system that would prevent people from buying a car? Probably not.

These days the car is no more a luxury thing but an essential one, especially for the middle income people, believe me or not. For instance, if you want to go to your relative's house with your wife and children, how would you go? Option 1, CNG auto-rickshaw or taxi cab. They become unavailable during the rush hour. Again, you would hardly get any of them that would want to go to your desired destination. Luckily if you get one, then it would charge you almost double the actual fare. In addition to the sufferings, CNG auto-rickshaws and taxicabs become a risky transport after dusk. Option 2, Bus. Well, a bus does not maintain time schedule making it a time consuming mode of trans-

port. And when it comes, it remains overloaded. Most of the time it becomes difficult to find a place to stand inside the bus. Option 3, rickshaw. Most of the Dhaka city roads are off-limit to rickshaws, and it is necessary to keep the roads free from traffic jam. So, absolutely nothing is there.

Recently, I came across a news report that people do not arrange social gatherings very often. Why not? Would you pay a visit to your relative's house considering all these hassles while travelling? We understand that we don't have many roads and private cars are mostly responsible for traffic jam. But it can't prevent people from owning a car. Statistics show that private cars occupy 70% of the road space while carrying only 1.3% of passengers. The situation will not improve unless we construct new roads and modernize our transport system.

G.M. Rezwan Rasul
BBA
American International University
Bangladesh

Disappointing cricket

The match between Bangladesh and the non-Test playing country Ireland disappointed the whole nation.

We need more responsible players to represent the nation in such important events.

Md. Mosharaf Hossain

One-mail

Scholarship quota

To encourage and to provide some financial support, the government of Bangladesh has been giving scholarship to students of class V. Pupils of general education who are in class V are eligible to appear in this primary scholarship exams. The quota has been fixed for each thana area to provide opportunity to the students all over the country. On merit and quota basis students are selected for this scholarship. Say, a particular thana has a quota of 50 scholarships, 50 students are selected on the basis of scholarship exam results.

In the last couple of years, the area under Motijheel thana in Dhaka city has been divided into four parts, namely, Motijheel, Sabujbag, Khilgaon and Paltan and new thanas have been set up. In case of quota for primary scholarship all the four thanas are still treated as one thana like before. It may be mentioned that in case of junior scholarship, separate quota has been fixed for these four thanas.

I would like to urge the authorities concerned to arrange separate quotas for primary scholarship under Motijheel, Sabujbag, Khilgaon and Paltan thana areas on the basis of the number of schools, students, voter population, or whatever the government may think fit.

Tahrima Ashraf
Central Bashabo, Dhaka

No surprise!

Every year we wait for the national budget and subsequent increase of prices. This year because of our over-transparent Finance Ministry we did not have to wait for long. Most of the figures of ups and downs of tax and other related matters were in our knowledge much before. The only thing we had to check was whether the finance minister pronounced the figures accurately. We were not disheartened. Because of transparency of the ministry the car importers did bumper business assisted by transparent customs officials. They even risked their lives to climb up the car-loaded vessels in high sea, ignoring stormy weather!

M. Sanaul Huq
Uttara Model Town, Dhaka

IT neglected

In the budget, development of technology has got little attention. The IT sector has been allocated only Tk. 100 crore.

Obviously, the decision makers have failed to attach due attention to the crucially important sector.

Sabir Hossain

Uttara, Dhaka

MPs

It appears that the government is updating the "To get" list for the MPs. The list, as it stands now, has a NAM flats in Dhaka, b) Office with full staff in Dhaka (why not in the respective localities? c) Luxury Pajero jeep with driver and fuel etcetera, d) Administrative and financial authority in Upazila Parishads, e) Chairmanship of governing bodies of all educational institutions of respective localities, f) Authority to beat anybody (as seen in Cox's Bazar), g) Authority to extort (as seen in Chittagong). The list is getting bigger and bigger every day.

Now the question is who is going to prepare the "To do" list for the MPs? Moreover, the voters would like to get something in return from the MPs whom they elected. But who will ensure that the MPs will work for the people, instead of lengthening the list of their demands?

Mohammad Ataul Hoque

One-mail

Daylight saving

Among other considerations, one of the reasons for the birth and launching of Rural Electrification Programme was that the rural people go to bed too early thus wasting a lot of man-hours. It is an irony that now we can't provide them enough electricity in the evening hours to be more productive.

Day light saving is a smart idea. I am sure a lot of mathematics must have gone into establishing a co-relation between Day Light Saving and Energy saving. But there is even a smarter way to achieve the same goal. In summer months, we can start all our official, commercial and educational activities one hour in advance and revert back on the onset of winter. Playing with the clock will bring in a lot of chaos, confusion and embarrassment for the administration. I hope the Govt will review its decision. Just to paraphrase a common Bangla saying: an earlier minor embarrassment is still better than a grand disaster later.

We should save sunlight hours because it is of advantage to us and not because the rest of the world does it, and least of all, just because one of our neighbouring country has started doing it!

M. Zakiul Islam

DOHS, Baridhara

Dhaka

Tipaimukh and Saarc

We are watching many movements, discussions and campaigns to protest the Tipaimukh dam. Tipaimukh dam is threatening our country but our govt. is not working on it at all. We are a member of Saarc and Saarc began its journey from Bangladesh. So, the responsibility to make Saarc effective comes to us first. Why did we build Saarc?

Was it built for entertaining the ministers, prime ministers or presidents of these eight member countries? Every year we see there is a summit, and all the guardians from the member countries meet at a place, discuss some issues, give superb speeches and finally enjoy some cultural and entertainment programmes arranged by the host country. Is that all for which it was built, entertaining our state representatives? If problems like Tipaimukh, cannot be solved through Saarc, then it is useless. So my request to the authorities, please do something now.

Make Saarc effective and solve sub-continental issues through it.

Arup Ratan Paul
Department of Business Administration
Shahjalal University of Science & Technology (SUST), Sylhet

Save our heritage



Ancient monuments and buildings are the material evidence of our past. There are several heritage buildings/settlements in our country. So far a few of them have been enlisted as antiquities. But in the national Antiquities Act 1968, it is clearly mentioned that any ancient product of human activity, movable or immovable, illustrative of art, architecture will be treated as antiquity. So, the government should take a firm initiative to enlist heritage buildings/settlements all over our country and declare them as protected antiquities before their extinction as some are in very bad condition. In the Clause 19 of national Antiquities Act, 1968, it is men-

tioned that no person shall, except for carrying out the purpose of this Act, destroy, break, damage, alter, injure, deface or mutilate, or scribble, write or engrave any inscription or sign on any antiquity. But a question is raised regarding the wrong and unscientific conservation work that is destroying our history.

The main problem behind this situation is that international guidelines are not yet followed for conservation work. Things must improve in this sector.

Zamal Uddin Shaikh
Lecturer
Department of Architecture, SUB, Dhaka

Weapon of logic

After successful completion of AUDC (Asian Universities Debating Championship), I would like to thank EWU for arranging such a prestigious debating event. Debate is not only a strong intellectual weapon of logic and argument, it is more than that. It encourages students to be knowledgeable, increases leadership quality and analytical power. But in case of English debate we need to realize the necessity of learning English well. We fail to achieve the best in this tournament, though others Asian countries like the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore are doing well. I urge the government to take some steps for our educational system. English has to be given priority from the primary level.

Trained teachers and expert tutors are required for this purpose. And at the same time, provisions should be created by the universities to encourage participation of students in international debating events through assisting them both financially and logically.

Md. Mizanur Rahman
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Dhaka

Obama's stand

It is really a great call by President Barack Obama for a new beginning between the US and Muslims around the world. I guess from now on people of this country need cooperation of all for their progress and prosperity. Let us all forget the past and work together towards that goal.

Shafiqul Islam, NY

opposition again started boycotting in the similar fashion. This time the people do not know the reasons for their boycott. I believe, it was pure egotism, in Bangla we call it "maan", meaning vanity. Our experts suggest that it is the duty of the government to bring the opposition to parliament. This means that the opposition may boycott any time at their sweet will and the government is duty-bound to bring them back to make the parliament sessions meaningful. The opposition MPs have no responsibility to attend and speak for their voters.

This government is only five months old. It is not possible for the government to deliver all the services it promised to the people. But our opposition seems to have become impatient and is trying to drum up public support against this government.

They are looking for a ground to start agitation to compel the government to refrain from an in-depth investigation of 10-trucks of arms, trial of BDR carnage, war criminals and investigation into ex-parliament bosses' irregularities and many more.

The cats are getting out of the bags and if this continues many more will come out to the opposition's embarrassment.

Is there any way out? Can our experts create an atmosphere for meaningful parliament sessions? The people of this country need cooperation of all for their progress and prosperity. Let us all forget the past and work together towards that goal.

Shafiqul Islam, NY

Unfair bus fares

It is quite difficult for the departments of the government to regularly monitor all the problems & sufferings of the people and address them properly. But there are some man-made problems which can be solved easily if the authorities look into them.

Thousands of passenger buses ply across Dhaka city roads every day. Different buses have different fares they apply their own techniques to snatch peoples' money into their pockets. Bus conductors of the important route number-6, plying from Motijheel to Gulshan Section-2, have been charging their own bus fares for a long time.

What we have seen in the past is that our two major parties made such boycott a culture. When the winning party forms the government, the loser invariably decides not to cooperate with their rivals and starts boycotting the sessions for this or that reason.

The latest example was the opposition's boycott of 9th parliament session. The reason for that boycott was the "sitting arrangement" created by their own speaker before leaving office. In that session their main concern was the best seats and not the parliament session. However, after a lot of bargain the opposition finally attended some of the sessions.

In the second session

which was a very important one, the budget session, the

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I applaud the drive to free the rivers from greedy land grabbers.

Influential people having

links with the government find

it easy to grab land and

construct buildings on the rivers.

I am appalled at the condition

of the Buriganga, the murky

water, the stench. It must be

extremely unhygienic for

those who live around the old

town area. I do hope the rivers

around my city can be saved.

Will the drive be sustainable? I

just hope people do not forget

about this issue.

Samia Ahmed

University of Dhaka

Editor

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Child labour

Children aged 8 to 12 are often seen engaged in manual labour. Many of them work as domestic servants and maidservants. Sometimes they are engaged to work in the fields as well as in shops, restaurants, and small factories. They polish boots, sell chanachur, badam and vegetables. They also work as porters. Though labour is sacred, child labour is a crime. The people who engage them take full advantage of their minor age and helplessness. The children engaged as servants or maidservants have to work from early morning to late hours at night-- fifteen to eighteen hours a day, so to say. They are not allowed any recess and recreation. Moreover, they are always dealt with harshly. Very often they are punished mercilessly. They are often compelled to take rotten and inferior food. In fact, they are not treated as human beings. They face similar ill treatment in the hotels, shops and factories. They work for a longer period with less wages.



-- Child labour should be stopped by law.

-- Education should be made compulsory for the children.

-- Poor parents should be paid allowances to supplement their income and be asked to send their children to madrasas and schools.

-- Above all, the children coming from poor families should be given free books and kits to continue their studies.

Habibur Rashid Ismail
Jamea Rahmania Fadil Madrasa
Chittagong

Saving the rivers

Over

the

last two weeks or so, images of rivers in the throes of death have appeared on the front page of The Daily Star. We the readers have watched, to our horror, the ugly face of encroachment. The concrete structures built by these grabbers on the lifeline of the capital city are reminiscent of the prehistoric reptiles or some other slimy creatures.

We read in the textbooks that there are some two hundred rivers flowing across the land. Simply put, the whole socio-economic fabric of this land is related to the rivers. One wonders how many of those rivers are still alive. If the big rivers are in a comatose state, then the conditions of the tributaries must be worse.

Since

this

alluvial land is the gift of the rivers, choking them is a suicidal act. Yet all pervasive greed is getting the better of common sense.

Zabed Wali

Pahartali, Chittagong

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I applaud the drive to free the rivers from greedy land grabbers. Influential people having links with the government find it easy to grab land and construct buildings on the rivers. This would be nuclear power plant was established about half a century ago on 260 acres of land at Rooppur in Pabna. Even today I cherish the fond memory of participating in the procession demanding the construction of this nuclear power plant during my student life at BUET in the late sixties. Responsible ministers of this government are also telling that the first Padma bridge at Mawa and the second one at Paturia will be completed within the next 3-5 years. The prime minister herself told that whatever it costs, the government would hopefully start generating power in five years adding 1000MW of electricity to the national grid is big news for the nation that is suffering from crippling power crisis.

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It is not clear how the colossal costs of these projects will be managed. There is not enough fund for setting up even the conventional power plants. If one Padma bridge at Mawa can be materialized, a major part of the country will be benefited with a positive impact on our national economy through utilizing the Mongla port. In reality, it is seen that the government cannot even maintain normal ferry services with regular dredging of the rivers. So one can question how it will be done for all the rivers of the country. These statements are being made by politicians and there is a saying that when a politician says yes, he means perhaps, when he says perhaps, he means no and when he says no, he is not a politician. But we sincerely want to believe that our politicians are

Join the space race!

Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Has